

Already in My Back Yard: Community Opposition to Social Service Agencies in
Gentrifying Neighborhoods

by

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Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master in City Planning
at the
Massachusetts Institute of Technology
June 2006

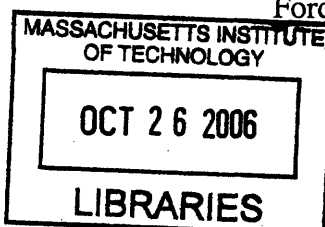
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ABSTRACT

Communities often object to the siting of controversial social service agencies in their neighborhoods. Traditional NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) literature outlines not only the forces at work in NIMBY dynamics, but also proven strategies that social service agencies have used in order to overcome such opposition. There is little research, however, on the “flip side” of this scenario – what happens when an established social service agency begins to see gentrification, and as a result, community opposition, in *its* back yard? This thesis looks at two such cases in Boston’s South End and examines their responses to gentrification in the context of traditional NIMBY literature. What it uncovers is that the dynamics involved in the “flip side” of NIMBY have an additional dimension not explored in traditional NIMBY literature – namely, the force of neighborhood change itself. When social service agencies are “there first,” and gentrification follows, community opposition to the facility varies based on the speed and scale of neighborhood change, and how the real estate market alters the community landscape.

Thesis Advisor: Langley C. Keyes

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Acknowledgments:

This thesis was a labor of love. When I first began my research several months ago, I was filled with both terror and dread, fearing the entire thesis experience would be lonely and incredibly isolating. It turned out to be anything but. In fact, it was an exceedingly collaborative effort, made possible by many people who were tremendously generous with their time and insights. I want to thank some of the folks who made my final semester of graduate school so rewarding.

Kathy Emrich, who was, for all intents and purposes, my interview “dealer,” provided me with countless contacts, present and past, in the Ellis neighborhood. Her willingness to dig up old phone numbers and yellowing documents was instrumental to this research. Kathe McKenna’s enthusiasm for this project was equally as important; Haley House is a complicated place, and her eagerness to shed light on it and to connect me with others who understand its history is something for which I am most grateful. Dave Manzo, whose “Urban Analysis” class I took as an undergraduate in 1998, is clearly responsible for my landing in this graduate program in the first place; I resurfaced in his e mail box nearly ten years after he introduced me to the writings of Jane Jacobs, and the calls he placed on my behalf made accessing people and information monumentally easier. I also need to thank the nearly two dozen people – many of whom are not named in this thesis – who took the time to reflect on their neighborhoods and their organizations and to share their thoughts with me over coffee or lunch. It is their insights that became the seeds of this work. And finally, I want to thank my advisor, Lang Keyes. The sheer amount of time he committed to this project, the enthusiasm he showed for the research itself, and the encouragement he doled out on a nearly daily basis were without a doubt a huge part of why I found this entire experience so rewarding. I looked forward to Tuesdays at two. We had a blast in each and every meeting, and I always left his office with renewed enthusiasm for what I ultimately came to view as our – as opposed to simply my – work.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The “Not In My Backyard” (NIMBY) syndrome is well researched. The dynamics of community opposition to the siting of controversial public service facilities have been widely studied in an attempt to understand how to best plan for and overcome it. NIMBY is certainly not a term used only by professionals, however; it is now part of the American vernacular. NIMBY responses to the proposed siting of agencies that serve the homeless are often particularly extreme. As a result, the actors responsible for siting such facilities have developed a series of strategies for gaining community support – or at the very least, acceptance – for these facilities.

Classic NIMBY literature and debate, however, focus on understanding and planning for community objection to the *initial siting* of controversial facilities in neighborhoods that oppose them. Meaning, NIMBY research to this point has looked at scenarios in which the neighborhood is “in place” and the facility is attempting to move in. There is little research, however, on the “flip side” of this scenario. What happens when “blighted” neighborhoods gentrify around an established homeless services provider – when the *neighborhood* is “moving” and the organization is the actor staying in place? How do residents respond when they knowingly – or unknowingly – become a shelter’s next-door neighbor? What is the response – if any – of the agency itself? How do these responses compare to the existing understanding of the “classic” NIMBY dynamic?

This thesis will begin by looking at traditional NIMBY literature and the recommendations it offers to social service agencies attempting to avoid or overcome NIMBY opposition. It will then tell the story of two very different social service providers in Boston's South End – Haley House and Pine Street Inn – exploring how each has responded to neighborhood gentrification. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the last chapter of this thesis will draw conclusions about what makes the “flip side” of NIMBY different from traditional NIMBY. It will answer the question: what is *missing* from traditional NIMBY literature that makes it insufficient to address the challenges faced by those battling the “flip side” of NIMBY?

CHAPTER 2

NIMBY: Traditional Concerns and Organizational Responses

The dynamics of NIMBYism are not a mystery. Community opposition to the siting of controversial social service agencies – and strategies for how these agencies can combat such resistance – have been extensively researched. This chapter will outline the neighborhood concerns that traditionally arise when social service agencies that serve “objectionable” populations – such as homeless individuals or the mentally ill – attempt to locate in residential neighborhoods. It will also look at factors that determine the extent of community opposition, and strategies that have proven to be successful in overcoming it.

The Neighborhood Concerns

NIMBY arguments are fairly predictable. Although not each objection arises in each case, there are three broad concerns prevalent in NIMBY literature: property values, crime and safety, and threats to the character of the neighborhood.

Property Values

Although there are no data to support this concern,¹ residents often fear that the presence of a social service organization will negatively affect their own property values.² This particular argument is likely to be more pronounced in areas in which home ownership rates are high.

¹ Dear and Taylor, 1982, State of California, 1988. Cited in Dear, 290; Dear and Wilton, 1995, cited in Wolch, 657.

² Anello and Shuster, 11; Dear, 290; Pope, 5; Wolch, 654-657.

Crime and Safety

Communities often claim that siting a shelter in the neighborhood will lead to an increase in crime.³ This fear is particularly pronounced in the case of homeless shelters. Michael Dear – known for his extensive research in the field of NIMBY dynamics – explains:

Concerns about personal security are more common in response to certain client groups than to others. The key variables in this category are client dangerousness and unpredictability (Dear and Laws 1986; Dear and Gleeson 1991; Lee et al. 1990). Unsurprisingly, substance abusers (particularly drug addicts who might be associated with criminal behavior to support their habits) and exoffenders (with manifest records of lawlessness) figure prominently in this category. But residents have also expressed unease about the mentally disabled, who may display aberrant or aggressive public behavior. Neighborhood concerns about personal security often find expression as questions about facility operating procedures, especially supervision arrangements.⁴

It is not uncommon for homeless individuals to be battling mental illness and chemical addiction. In this regard, the challenges to siting homeless shelters that serve this population are similar to those faced by agencies targeting the mentally ill.

³ Dear and Wilton, www.bettercommunities.org; Pope, 5.; Anello and Shuster, 11.

⁴ Dear, 290.

Character of the neighborhood

Opposition to the siting of social services often takes the form of the general fear for “character of the neighborhood.”⁵ While this argument can be about the physical design of the proposed building and how it will fit in the existing buildings, it can often be about the clients to be served as well. Dear explains that “specific threats to overall neighborhood amenity include the physical appearance of the clients, some of whom may appear dirty or unkempt; and anti-social behavior, such as loitering, public urination or defecation, and aggressive panhandling.”⁶

Factors Determining the Extent of Opposition

According to Dear’s oft-cited work on the subject, there are four factors that determine the *level* of opposition that a proposed social service agency is likely to face: client characteristics, nature of the facility, characteristics of the host community, and programmatic considerations.⁷

Client characteristics

In the “hierarchy of acceptance,” homeless shelters fall into the “mixed review” category,⁸ meaning they often face at least some community objection; facilities like schools and nursing homes are usually the most welcome, while garbage dumps and prisons are the most difficult to site.⁹ Although shelters are not as objectionable as some

⁵ Dear, 290. Pope, 6.

⁶ Dear, 290.

⁷ Ibid., 291-294.

⁸ Ibid., 292.

⁹ Ibid.

other types of human service facilities, it is important to note that “the lowest in the acceptance hierarchy (the least desirable neighbors) are those with ‘social diseases’: crime, alcoholism and drugs.”¹⁰ Thus, shelters that serve clients who might exhibit symptoms of these “social diseases” – as opposed to family homeless shelters, or shelters for battered women – might fall closer to the “most unwelcome” side of the hierarchy of acceptance. Both Haley House and Pine Street Inn work with a significant number of clients suffering from “social diseases.”

Nature of the human service facility

The “nature” of the facility, according to Dear, includes: the type (e.g., residential/non-residential); the size (“all else being equal, a large facility will be less acceptable than a smaller one,”);¹¹ the number (the number of similar organizations already in the area); the operating procedures of the facility (“appropriate staffing to ensure client supervision can tip the balance toward community acceptance. Other factors that determine the facility’s profile in the community are its operating hours, its schedule of activities, and formal neighborhood outreach programs”);¹² the physical appearance of the building, and the reputation of the agency itself. The case studies that will be presented in this thesis fall at opposite ends of the spectrum in terms of the “nature” of their facilities.

¹⁰ Dear, 291.

¹¹ Ibid., 292.

¹² Ibid.

Characteristics of the host community

The specific characteristics of the prospective host community also play an important role in the level of opposition the facility might face. Among these characteristics are previous exposure to the population to be served (studies of the effects of exposure have actually had mixed results) and geography (research shows some variation in acceptance by region and local geography, including metropolitan/non-metropolitan and suburban/nonsuburban).¹³ Still, above all else, “the single best predictor of opposition is income; the more affluent tend to be less welcoming.”¹⁴ Affluence, however, says little about neighborhood history or context, both of which are critical to understanding the history of opposition in the two case studies that will be presented in this thesis.

Programmatic considerations

When faced with the possibility of a homeless shelter in their neighborhood, residents might claim that the area already hosts more than its “fair share” of public service organizations, and that additional agencies constitute “oversaturation.”¹⁵ Sometimes, groups claim that oversaturation serves to “ghettoize” the facility’s clients. “Sophisticated opponents express their opposition in terms of clients’ needs, representing the host neighborhood as unsuitable or unsafe for the client group. This is NIMBY with a caring face.”¹⁶

¹³ Takahashi and Dear, 90.

¹⁴ Dear, 293.

¹⁵ Anello and Shuster, 10.

¹⁶ Dear, 290.

In short, neighborhoods faced with the possibility of a shelter or other controversial facilities have concerns that fall into one of three categories: property values, crime, and neighborhood character. The intensity of these concerns varies based on characteristics of the clients to be served, the nature of the proposed facility, the characteristics of the host community, and the extent of social services already present in the neighborhood.

Agencies looking to locate their facilities in neighborhoods that might object to their presence must think strategically about how best to approach their siting plans.

Organizational Responses: Two Approaches to Siting

Per the 1988 Fair Housing Amendments and the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act, social service agencies are not legally obligated to seek approval from or even *notify* neighborhood residents of their plans to site a facility. As such, two distinct approaches to siting controversial human service facilities have emerged: collaborative and autonomous.¹⁷ (While this research is primarily based around group housing for the mentally ill, it is safe to assume that Haley House and Pine Street Inn are serving a comparably objectionable population.) Regardless of the approach chosen, the facility must also consider which, if any, postentry communication strategies it will employ.

Collaborative Approach to Siting

Collaborative approaches stress contact with the neighborhood in the early stages of site planning – this process is sometimes informal but is more often highly planned.¹⁸ “The

¹⁷ Dear 1991, Baron and Piasecki, 1981. Cited in Zippay, 302.

¹⁸ Dear 1977, 1991, 1992, CRISP, 1989, Wagner and Mitchell, 1980. Cited in Zippay, 302.

process” of education and outreach “is regarded by some advocates as a key element in promoting the long-term community integration of the site and its residents, and rests in part on community theories equating participation with investment and support.”¹⁹ The collaborative approach aims to build community trust as the foundation for a long-term relationship with the neighborhood. This approach can be loosely correlated with what others call a “high-profile” approach; both involve high levels of community involvement in the early stages of planning.

Collaboration and “high-profile” are broad terms and as such, encompass a myriad of more specific strategies such as community education, outreach, community incentives, and the formation of community advisory groups.²⁰ Collaborative/high-profile approaches to overcoming NIMBY also stress the importance of leveraging formal and informal local power brokers; these “brokers” can range from well-known neighborhood figures such as the president of the local block association (informal) to the head of the city planning department (formal).²¹ Forums for community input on building design are also recommended, as they can help allay resident fears about the possibility of the facility being “out of place” in the neighborhood.²² The “high-profile” approach is recommended when, among other things, the agency has a strong history of service within the community, has broad political support and/or the proposed site is city-owned.²³

¹⁹ Byalin & Harowitz, 1988, Burk, 1978, Burke and Hogan, 1986. Cited in Zippay, 302.

²⁰ Dear, 294-295.

²¹ Anello and Shuster, 14-15.

²² Pope, 32.

²³ Anello and Shuster, 12-13.

Autonomous Approach to Siting

Alternatively, the autonomous approach claims that notification adds stigma to an already isolated group. This approach stresses the importance of normalizing the population it serves²⁴ and “accords priority to the rights of the clients.”²⁵ It implicitly or explicitly “reject(s) the notion of difference, and insist(s) on the clients’ rights to live, work, play and receive care wherever they choose, under circumstances of their own choosing.”²⁶ As such, there is no intentional collaboration with the neighborhood prior to the siting. “Providers, clients, and the advocates involved in this approach usually reply to disgruntled opponents with: ‘you didn’t seek permission to move into this neighborhood, so why should we?’”²⁷ The autonomous approach has a better chance of succeeding if it is backed by recognized authority, such as the power of a local or state mandate, even if that mandate is never invoked.²⁸ Even prior to the legislation that gave it legal authority to do so, a “low-profile” community relations approach (similar to an autonomous approach) was considered an appropriate strategy in many cases, including when neither staff nor time are available to execute a “high-profile approach” or when the community “may not feel the long-term effects of the proposed facility, nor organize against it.”²⁹

²⁴ Zippay, 302.

²⁵ Dear, 294.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Dear, Michael and Wilton, Robert, www.buildingbettercommunities.org.

²⁹ Anello and Shuster, 12.

A Note About Postentry Considerations

Postentry strategies refer to the level and type of communication the organization maintains with the neighborhood after it has been sited. Agencies that choose a collaborative approach to siting are more likely to continue regular interaction with the neighborhood after the agency has begun operating.³⁰ Hosting open houses during which the residents can tour the facility, participating in neighborhood clean-ups and joining the local neighborhood association are just a few examples of social service organizations' postentry initiatives.³¹ While neither exclusively a postentry strategy nor a siting strategy – it instead applies to both – agencies should also pay particular attention to zoning and building codes.³² This is a relatively easy way to make overtures to the community, both before and after siting.

³⁰ Zippay, 307.

³¹ Dear, 297; Zippay, 307.

³² Dear, 296; Anello and Shuster, 17.

Introduction to the Cases

Haley House is a small Catholic Worker Movement house of hospitality, offering meals, companionship, and other services to some of Boston's neediest. It has no residential component, and thus cannot be classified as a homeless shelter, but serves many homeless individuals or others whose neighborhood presence can be considered comparably "objectionable." Pine Street Inn is the region's largest provider of services to the homeless.³³ Both agencies own all or part of their operating facilities and thus cannot be "pushed" out by the rent hikes that accompany gentrification.

Largely through personal interviews of residents and agency staff, the following two chapters will examine and compare the stories of Haley House and Pine Street Inn on several points: the specific histories of the immediate neighborhoods in which the agencies are located (including the pace and extent of demographic change), the response of the neighborhoods to the agencies over time, the actors who comprise the organizations' support networks, the deliberate and non-deliberate strategies employed by the agencies in order to adapt to the changing neighborhood, and the size and scale of the agencies' operations. The analysis of the cases will be couched in the context of the South End itself. Once considered Boston's skid row, subsequently home to a significant community effort to maintain affordable housing in the face of questionable urban renewal plans, and now a neighborhood of multi-million dollar condominiums interspersed with residual pockets subsidized housing, the South End is a complicated community with a complicated history.

³³ Coolidge, Aimee. "Re: Fact/Quote checking." Email from Aimee Coolidge. May 8, 2006.



*Halevy House and Pine Street Inn within the borders of the South End as defined by the Boston Redevelopment Authority.
Basemap source: www.googleearth.com*

CHAPTER 3

Case Study: Haley House

When Judy Nichols first came to visit Haley House in 2004, she recalls driving down Dartmouth Street, watching as the numbers on the buildings got closer and closer to 23. She “kept expecting the neighborhood to change”³⁴ – to become the blighted inner city she had expected would be home to the Catholic Worker Community she was planning to join. But suddenly, she reached her destination – a tidy brick rowhouse set among other tidy brick rowhouses. This neighborhood looked less like a place where residents adamantly fought for social justice for some of our society’s neediest, and more like a gentrified neighborhood where concerns about aesthetics and property values abounded. In fact, it was both.



The Dartmouth Street entrance to Haley House. Guests enter through the Montgomery Street entrance around the corner.

³⁴ Nichols, Judy. Personal interview.

A Brief History of Haley House

Haley House was founded in 1966 in a basement apartment on Upton Street in Boston's South End "by a few people desiring to live and share resources with poor people, mostly men suffering from alcoholism."³⁵ In 1967, the organization moved its base of operations a few blocks away, purchasing a brownstone at 23 Dartmouth Street for \$21,000³⁶ and opening a small soup kitchen on the building's first floor. Haley House's mission was heavily influenced by the Catholic Worker Movement, which entails, in part "opening one's own doors to the poor, inviting them to stay, feeding them, sharing one's life with them, and taking personal responsibility for the circumstances that contribute to poverty."³⁷ Springing from a commitment to "nonviolence, voluntary poverty, prayer, and hospitality for the homeless, exiled, hungry, and forsaken," Catholic Workers today "continue to protest injustice, war, racism, and violence of all forms."³⁸ The Movement is "best known for houses of hospitality located in run-down sections of many cities."³⁹ Communities work "in support of labor unions, human rights, cooperatives and the development of a non-violent culture."⁴⁰

Forty years after its inception, Haley House remains true to some of the most important tenets of the Catholic Worker Movement, including an active live-in community at 23 Dartmouth Street. The "live-ins" staff the soup kitchen in exchange for room and board;

³⁵ www.haleyhouse.org

³⁶ Bernardi, 21.

³⁷ Ibid., 12.

³⁸ www.catholicworker.org

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

they choose to “live simply”⁴¹ and work to “break down barriers” between themselves and the guests.⁴² Haley House serves almost anyone who walks – or in some cases stumbles – through its doors. Forming personal relationships in a safe and welcoming environment is central to the organization’s mission, as is a political activism that was common in the South End (as elsewhere in the country) in the 1960s. Forty years after its inception, when the South End has become known for its trendy shops and pricey real estate, voluntary poverty and acts of civil disobedience – often rooted in deep religious or spiritual values and respect for the dignity of all people – are still part of the culture of Haley House. Talk of institutional injustice is common, and arrests are not unheard of.

This is not to say that Haley House is a stagnant organization. As Elizabeth Bernardi notes in her 2004 undergraduate thesis on the history of Haley House:

...the community at Haley House does not feel bound by the traditions of the Catholic Worker. Catholicism is not a major player in the house and Masses are no longer said. Most of the community is not Catholic, some are not even religious. And when going against Catholic Worker tradition seems practical, as it did during the Vietnam War, when the house accepted non-profit status so it could be a place of service for conscientious objectors, Haley House goes its own way. In recent years, there has even been talk of eliminating the title “Catholic Worker”

⁴¹ www.haleyhouse.org

⁴² McKenna, Kathe. Personal interview.

at 23 Dartmouth. What Haley House is by definition may be debatable, but its tradition, its roots are certainly with the Catholic Worker movement.⁴³

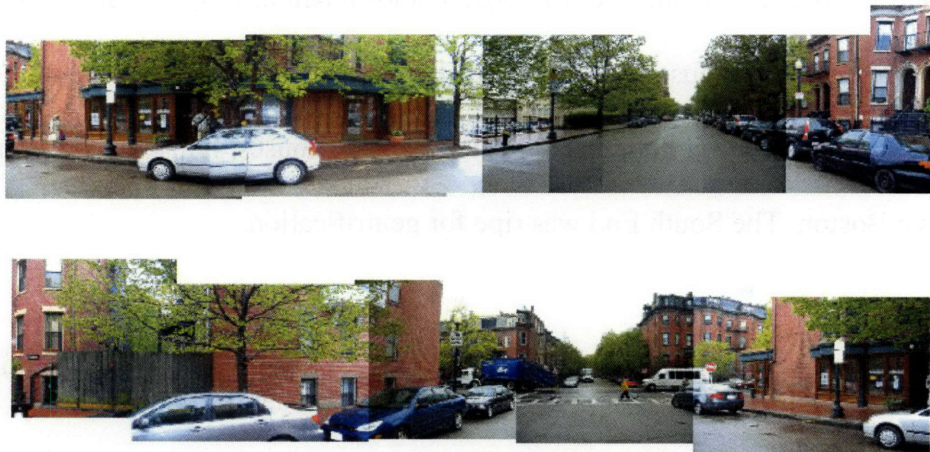
Since it was originally founded as a house of hospitality in 1966, Haley House has expanded its services based on the evolving needs of its clients – and the neighborhood at large. Concerned about the rapid disappearance of rooming houses and other affordable lodging from the South End, Haley House has purchased several nearby properties since the early 1990s, renovating and preserving them as affordable housing. Activism and social justice *outside* of 23 Dartmouth Street are clearly still an important part of Haley House’s ideology – and are reminiscent of the “old South End.” But, the heart and soul of the organization – and what most people who are familiar with Haley House think of when they hear its name – is the soup kitchen on the corner of Montgomery and Dartmouth Streets.⁴⁴ Still loyal to its mission to serve those most isolated from traditional society, the soup kitchen’s guests are often destitute and may be battling chemical addiction, mental illness, or both.

In the late 1960s the men served by Haley House looked fairly similar to some of the men living in the neighborhood’s rooming houses and vacant buildings; the soup kitchen was certainly not the only “source” of gentlemen who were “down on their luck.” Today, Haley House’s guests are not often mistaken for local property owners. Although 23 Dartmouth Street offers meals for the elderly and other services later in the day, it is “the guys” coming to morning meals who are most noticeable. Lining up outside of Haley

⁴³ Bernardi, 4.

⁴⁴ McKenna, Kathe. Personal interview.

House in the pre-dawn hours in order to assure a prime seat for breakfast, the guys, according to neighbors, can create quite a ruckus. Still, the presence of the guests isn't nearly as pervasive as it has been in the past. Forty years ago, loitering outside of Haley house was fairly common – there was plenty of vice in the immediate blocks to keep the guys occupied. Today, guests tend to come to the tiny brownstone, eat or receive other services, and leave the area by late morning. Guests who wish to briefly leave Haley House during breakfast in order to smoke are asked to walk around the block while doing so, so as not to disturb the neighbors by loitering. Milling about is done primarily in the morning before the soup kitchen opens its doors; guests tend not to loiter around Haley House after meals.



A panoramic view of Haley House. The guests' entrance is above, left. The homes of the direct abutters are above, right.

A Changing Neighborhood – The South End over Time

While Haley House's basic mission and core philosophy have not changed drastically in the last forty years, the organization is no longer in a "run-down" section of Boston. In 1967, the Ellis neighborhood – referencing the neighborhood association that encompasses the block on which Haley House is located – was comprised largely of rooming houses and vacant properties.⁴⁵ Today, neighboring brownstones sell for upwards of one million dollars.

John McKenna, one of the founders of Haley House and the husband of the co-founder and current executive director, notes that in the late 1960s in the Ellis neighborhood (as elsewhere in the South End) "You could walk down the street right here, and you'd be stepping over drunks. There were alcoholics, wall to wall poor."⁴⁶ Teeming with rooming houses and saloons, the South End was Boston's local den of iniquity. But having originally been built to house Boston's elite, it was also teeming with some of the nation's most beautiful – if dilapidated – Victorian rowhouses. It also had proximity to downtown Boston. The South End was ripe for gentrification.

Rediscovering the South End was a slow process. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, the first wave had begun:

The newcomers were well-to-do middle class families ideologically committed to a diverse urban environment, enamored with glorious Victorian residential

⁴⁵ McKenna, Kathe. Personal interview.

⁴⁶ Bernardi, 15.

structures, anxious for cheap housing – or all three. Increasingly, gays found the South End a welcoming environment, even if the crime statistics were high, and joined the ranks of newcomers. Lodging houses were converted back to single family homes as long-time owners cashed out. Old white male roomers died off or moved on as the bars and saloons became the first victim of the wrecking ball. The elderly white residents were not replaced with roomers. Prices for the South End row houses began to rise and kept rising. A shell could be bought for \$5000 in 1965. By 1974 the going price was \$45,000. And that jump was only the beginning.”⁴⁷

In the late 70s, the South End “was moving in the direction of upscale living. Families were being inexorably replaced by young singles and gay couples who were expanding into more and more of the upgrading squares.”⁴⁸ Restoring the tarnished Victorians to their former grandeur meant converting rooming houses back into single-family homes, and often, subsequently converting them into condominiums for individual sale. The bulk of the South End’s rooming houses were soon gone, as were the elderly tenants who had resided in them. Black property owners had sold their properties, lured by hefty profits. The bars and houses of ill repute had been driven out. The demographic of the neighborhood was changing, and would continue to do so for the next 20 years, as the real estate market in the South End barreled forward.

⁴⁷ Keyes, 11.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 13.

Despite the unstoppable real estate market and rapid demographic change, South Enders did not take the invasion of their neighborhood lying down. Having lived through the neighborhood's darkest years – successfully shutting down countless bars and liquor stores in the late 1960s, challenging urban renewal – community activism was alive and well among long-time neighborhood residents. Bitter battles with the city (and sometimes, among the residents themselves) over the retention of affordable housing ensued, and were “remarkably successful.”⁴⁹ Pockets of affordable housing, in the form of individual apartments or congregate developments, still stand among million dollar condos. The South End, known today for its stylish boutiques and restaurants and exorbitant real estate prices, has “the second highest level of low and moderate-income housing in all of Boston.”⁵⁰ To say that the South End is diverse – both racially and economically – is an understatement.

Clearly, the South End is a complex place. Still, many people moving into the Ellis neighborhood today are entirely unaware of the community's history – its checkered past, the return to its former glory, its tradition of diversity and community activism. At least one new resident did not know the definition of a rooming house. Many members of the current live-in community at Haley House know nothing of urban renewal or the South End outside of the history of Haley House itself. Large-scale condominium construction is barreling down the thoroughfares of the South End's final real estate frontier, but developers' proud claims to offering only the legally mandated one or two affordable

⁴⁹ Keyes, 12.

⁵⁰ City of Boston, Department of Neighborhood Development, “Affordable Units as a Percentage of Housing Stock, Boston Neighborhoods: 2005.” Cited in Keyes, 16.

units are going unchallenged. Where is the “old” South End – the one that would have blocked the developer’s cranes?

As it turns out, the “old” South End is still there – at least at Haley House. The agency has managed not only to survive the real estate roller coaster of the South End, but also to actually expand its services, purchasing and managing several other buildings in the neighborhood as part of its commitment to affordable housing in the South End. What is less clear is how this organization, operating in the middle of such an upscale neighborhood, continues to serve a population that most purchasers of a one million dollar condo would be hesitant to welcome as their neighbor. How do these two worlds – one old, one new – interact?

Haley House and the Local Neighborhood – Fitting In

Old and New South End, Old and New South Enders

The Ellis neighborhood is primarily residential, composed largely of three story brick rowhouses. Haley House occupies one such brownstone. The sign on the Montgomery Street entrance simply reads “Haley House,” and is accompanied by an image of a coffee cup. There is no reference to its mission, or what takes place inside its doors. The small scale of its operations means Haley House is, to a certain degree, anonymous to newer neighborhood residents; it serves approximately 40 guests at a time out of a building similar to those around it, in a neighborhood long known for its economic and ethnic diversity. A smattering of disheveled men is not really cause for alarm to long-time residents. Newer residents might be initially surprised upon seeing transients in an

otherwise affluent neighborhood, but are not necessarily immediately able to attribute their presence to Haley House.

The “neighborhood,” however, is not comprised solely of new residents. Peppered throughout the area are staunch supporters whose affiliations with Haley House span several decades. Kathe and John McKenna, both founders of Haley House (Kathe, as mentioned earlier, is still the Executive Director) live directly across the street from the organization; their front door faces its entrance. Kathe and John’s next-door neighbor was part of the live-in community at Haley House from 1968 to 1971. Dave Manzo, also a former member of the live-in community, and his wife Noreen, the Director of Affordable Housing at Haley House, live a few blocks away. Several board members live within the boundaries of the Ellis neighborhood. Thus, Haley House has a tremendously supportive local network – a cadre of allies that can be called upon if and when community opposition arises. In short, there are two South Ends in this part of the South End: one old, and one new.

Haley House and Neighborhood Conflict over Time

At no point has Haley House considered leaving the Ellis neighborhood. In forty years there have been “one or two” individuals who have tried to gain community-wide support in calling for Haley House’s expulsion; neither succeeded.⁵¹ But neighborhood conflict has certainly been part of Haley House’s history.

⁵¹ McKenna, Kathe. Personal interview.

Change in the Ellis neighborhood mirrors that of the story of the South End at large. In 1967, 23 Dartmouth Street was not the fashionable address it is today; the establishment of a soup kitchen in the neighborhood went entirely unopposed.⁵² In the 1970s, neighborhood change was afoot. Urban pioneers and former suburbanites were rapidly purchasing and rehabbing decrepit buildings in the Ellis Neighborhood, some turning a quick profit by “flipping” their investments, others staying on as permanent residents. By the late 1970s, and early 1980s, the Ellis neighborhood was fairing better than the adjacent areas. Tremont Street, a mere block away from Haley House, was the unofficial boundary, separating a recovering neighborhood from one still in crisis. Crossing it was done at one’s own peril.⁵³

Ellis’s revitalization did not happen on its own. Concerned residents worked with the Boston Redevelopment Authority to shut down scores of local bars;⁵⁴ the saloons had attracted a constant parade of alcoholics who loitered and slept in doorways and alleys. Neighbors fought hard to convince the city to plant trees along residential streets. Residents were “trying to pull the neighborhood up by the bootstraps.”⁵⁵ Many at the time, it seems, thought Haley House was attracting “people we didn’t need.”⁵⁶ Still, Haley House was not the target of large-scale neighborhood ire. While some would probably have liked to see it relocate, the residents appear to have been much more focused on sanitizing the neighborhood streets at large. The organization managed to

⁵² McKenna, Kathe. Personal interview.

⁵³ Personal interview #5.

⁵⁴ Personal interview #3.

⁵⁵ Personal interview #5.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

continue to operate undisturbed, quietly serving the very population some were trying to eject.

By the late 1980s, full-fledged gentrification gripped the streets around Haley House. The majority of loiterers and derelicts had fled to other neighborhoods. New residents had been paying increasingly steep prices for the brownstones near Haley House, and the soup kitchen was suddenly a more noticeable presence. Some noted that the clientele Haley House served was changing from “alcoholics to increasing numbers of emotionally disturbed people who sometimes threaten neighbors.”⁵⁷ Also around this time, Haley House, without proper permitting, erected a small garbage shed on the Montgomery Street side of the building. While it wouldn’t have caused a stir twenty years earlier, some neighbors were upset by what they viewed as disregard for the architectural integrity of the South End, and for the neighborhood itself.

Tensions between Haley House and the neighborhood at large came to a head. On September 22, 1988, Haley House called a community meeting in an effort to address increasing neighborhood concerns surrounding noise, safety, health and building codes, nuisance behaviors perpetrated by Haley House guests, and staff responsibilities.⁵⁸ The meeting, as recalled by a variety of those who were present, was well attended and got quite “tense” and even “angry.”⁵⁹ An article in the South End News noted that both a local resident not in support of Haley House and Kathe McKenna “agreed that feelings

⁵⁷ Guilfooy, Christine. “Fed Up with Haley House?”

⁵⁸ The Ad Hoc Committee on Haley House, unpublished memo.

⁵⁹ McKenna, Kathe. Personal Interview.

toward Haley House were largely negative.”⁶⁰ The article, entitled “Fed Up with Haley House?” indicated that according to some, “public opinion had shifted away from the agency” and that several people present, including a city councilor, felt that the organization should leave the quiet residential area and find another base of operations. Haley House clearly stated its intentions to stay. The Ad Hoc Committee on Haley House – comprised of Haley House staff, local residents, and some people who fell into both categories – was formed in an effort to improve relations between the soup kitchen and the neighborhood. It appears as though, despite the outrage depicted in the South End News article, there was no concerted effort to force Haley House to relocate.

While short lived, the committee did spark a much-needed dialogue between Haley House and the larger neighborhood.⁶¹ The committee drafted a memo citing a variety of nuisance behaviors on the part of the guests (noise, drinking, loitering, people lying in the street); the memo also outlined how Haley House and the neighborhood would address them going forward. This included calling the police if the activities were illegal, notifying staff if the activities in question were not illegal but rather simply inappropriate public behaviors, and Haley House staff making increased efforts to be “more visible on the street so as to give the guests and the neighbors a reassuring presence as well as closer monitoring” of the guests. The unpermitted shed was torn down, and Haley House has since followed the permitting process for all building construction. The memo noted, “Only by vigilance on the part of everyone can we hope to keep control of our environment and the people who make use of it.”

⁶⁰ Guilfooy, Christine. “Fed Up with Haley House?”

⁶¹ The Ad Hoc Committee on Haley House, unpublished memo; Telephone interview #9.

The late 1980s seem to have seen the most friction in the neighborhood; the committee formed in response to the 1988 meeting died out quickly. Indeed, the improvement in community relations is due in part to increased efforts on the part of Haley House staff to monitor guest behavior, but it is *also* due to the fact that the neighborhood ultimately *became less conducive* to loitering as the final vestiges of the formerly dilapidated South End receded. One long-time resident noted that she would have “been happy to see Haley House go” in the 1980s, but that now, she has absolutely no problem with her charitable neighbor.⁶² Since tensions peaked in the late 1980s, occasional flare-ups have been handled – with varying degrees of satisfaction to those parties involved – on an individual basis.

Neighborhood dynamics in this community are complex. Alliances are murky and have shifted and evolved over the years. Personal and institutional relationships morph and overlap. Periods of friction appear and then recede. Finally, equilibrium is established. More than anything else, the story of Haley House and the Ellis neighborhood at large is one of generally peaceful co-existence followed by occasional small battles, as two distinct communities struggle to live as neighbors.

How did Haley House, once considered a neighborhood scourge, managed to not only survive – but to expand? The following section will outline the community relations strategies, both deliberate and non-deliberate, that Haley House has utilized over the

⁶² Personal interview #5.

course of its tenure in the Ellis neighborhood, in an effort to begin to answer this question.

Analysis – Deliberate and Non Deliberate Strategies

Deliberate Strategies – A Unique Network of Supporters, A Longtime Neighbor as the Leader

The Network

Haley House's network of local supporters is by far its strongest attribute; it is quite possible that the nature of this network might in fact be unique to Haley House itself. Haley House is embedded in the neighborhood. A significant cohort of staff, former members of the live-in community and board members all live within a few blocks of 23 Dartmouth Street, many having moved into the neighborhood after forming a relationship with Haley House. When Haley House was under the most intense neighborhood pressure to "clean up its act," the organization called on its supporters; Kathe McKenna identifies some by name in the South End News article that reported on the 1988 meeting. Other neighbors not associated with Haley House are often aware of those who are.



The red circle represents Haley House. The pink circles are the homes of Haley House staff, board members, or former members of the live-in community.

Basemap source: www.googleearth.com

There was a point in time when the “new” neighborhood – increasingly concerned about property values and architectural aesthetics – was making great efforts to rid the streets of just the type of folks that Haley House was serving. However, fighting an organization that had so many strong supporters living within feet of its front door – one that had at least some sort of watchful eye over its guests – as opposed to concentrating on removing unsupervised loiterers from doorways and vacant buildings, would have been unwise. Although not necessarily part of a conscious strategy, the “new” neighborhood was choosing its battles carefully.

The Leader

For those neighborhood residents who are familiar with Haley House as an organization – not everyone is – Kathe McKenna is synonymous with Haley House.⁶³ She is the “thread” that has remained at Haley House since its inception.⁶⁴ McKenna is seen as a neighbor, in addition to a staff person at the local soup kitchen. Often, she is seen *only* as a neighbor – it is not uncommon for her Montgomery Street neighbors to not realize for some time that McKenna is even associated with Haley House. She does not introduce herself as such,⁶⁵ although there is no reason to assume that this is intentional.

Still, when neighbors do come to know Kathe’s association with Haley House, they tend to still *see* her as a neighbor. Simply put, “people like Kathe.”⁶⁶ While not always thrilled with the noise generated by Haley House, neighbors are likely to handle their issues as such – as neighbors. Perhaps this is because to do otherwise is less appealing when one later runs the risk of a chance encounter with the responsible party on the sidewalk.

⁶³ McKenna’s name came up, unprompted, in nearly every resident interview during the course of this research.

⁶⁴ Personal interview #11.

⁶⁵ Personal interview #4.

⁶⁶ Personal interview #11.

***Non-deliberate “Strategies” – Demographic and Physical Neighborhood Change,
Flying Under the Radar, The Feel Good Factor***

Demographic and Physical Neighborhood Change

Friction between Haley House and the neighborhood has generally been focused on problematic behaviors perpetrated by the guests and to issues associated with the physical condition of the building at 23 Dartmouth Street. Neither point of contention is as problematic to the neighborhood at present as it has been at other points in time. Today, noise and loitering of a less threatening nature are the most common complaints from Haley House’s neighbors, and generally come largely from the organization’s direct abutters. The building itself has been upgraded substantially as well; previously “pockmarked” and “mysterious” looking according to McKenna, newly installed windows along the Montgomery Street side of Haley House now make the comings and goings of the organization’s guests less puzzling to neighbors.

Haley House, in a sense, has acquiesced to its new neighbors – but has done so almost accidentally. Initially open from seven in the morning until nine in the evening and serving three meals per day, Haley House ultimately scaled back the soup kitchen’s operations, and has served “the guys” breakfast only for several years. The change in programming was motivated by a combination of staff shortages and a desire to expand services in other areas;⁶⁷ it was certainly not an effort to placate the neighborhood by decreasing traffic in and out of Haley House. But it has done exactly that. Similarly, the

⁶⁷ McKenna, Kathe. “Re: Fact checking.” E mail message from Kathe McKenna. May 9, 2006.

building upgrade in 1998, mentioned with gratitude by the majority of resident interviewees, was not intended as an overture to neighbors, but rather, as part of a financial plan to open a retail bakery in the building's storefront.⁶⁸ Nor was comforting the neighbors part of Haley House's strategy when opening the bakery – it was purely to fund the organization's food training program – but comforting the neighbors is what it did. The bakery fit in well with the community's small scale and was a welcome addition to a residential neighborhood that has traditionally preferred to support locally owned businesses. Knowing that a Haley house staff person could be accessed if necessary might have attributed to what some residents noted as a “gentler” attitude toward Haley House in recent years.⁶⁹ Unknowingly, Haley House was acquiescing to the neighborhood at large – seeing itself as a model neighbor, making few strategic adjustments to its operations as such, and being greeted by a grateful community.

Haley House has survived a critical turning point in a lengthy and complex neighborhood narrative. NIMBY literature frequently references a “continuum of threat;” such a continuum seems to apply to the story of Haley House as well. Initially unnoticed, then seen to a certain extent as a barrier to the neighborhood's revitalization, then finally viewed largely as a benign presence – or possibly, even a point of pride – in the neighborhood, the long-standing Catholic Worker house and its new neighbors have reached a point of relatively peaceful co-existence. Haley House, similar activist organizations and the clients they served once comprised the majority of South End. Today, although strong network of supporters helps keeps Haley House in good standing

⁶⁸ Manzo, Noreen. Personal Interview.

⁶⁹ Personal interview #11.

with the neighborhood at large, the very fact that Haley House and its clients are now outnumbered by their newer more affluent neighbors is a large part of why Haley House is seen as less of a threat than in years past. The organization has contained its clientele within the walls of 23 Dartmouth Street while still providing services, and guests no longer have any reason to loiter in the area upon leaving Haley House. Haley House has survived beyond a critical “tipping point” in the changing neighborhood demographic and is permitted to remain in operation there; the residents are no longer fearful of a possible slide backwards into neighborhood decay. Haley House weathered the gentrification storm and now sits in a shiny neighborhood in which a few – as opposed to many – indigent people are tolerated.

Flying Under the Radar

Newer neighborhood residents in the Ellis neighborhood are often only vaguely aware of the presence of some kind of charitable or public organization in their neighborhood;⁷⁰ disheveled men can sometimes be spotted in the vicinity of 23 Dartmouth Street, or smoking on the sidewalk in front of the entrance. One resident was entirely unaware of Haley House’s existence for several years after having moved in, despite living within one block of the agency.⁷¹ At least one new South Ender thought it was a restaurant.⁷² McKenna notes that in the beginning, Haley House’s invisibility “wasn’t intentional” – that the organization was so short-handed it didn’t have time to be an active neighbor. And while some Haley House staff are just now strategizing around how to become a

⁷⁰ Personal interviews #2, 3, 6.

⁷¹ Personal interview #6.

⁷² Personal interview #4.

more active neighbor, the organization does not have any type of organized outreach to new (or “newish”) residents. No representatives actively participate in neighborhood association meetings.

Interestingly, however, Haley House does not perceive itself as an anonymous presence in the neighborhood. McKenna estimates that “although there are some” people in the neighborhood who are unaware of Haley House’s existence, she doesn’t think it’s “too many.” Conversely, some neighborhood residents estimated that 9 out of 10 have no idea what Haley House is.⁷³ Its presence is felt by its direct abutters, but, courtesy of its small scale, other impact on the neighborhood is limited.

The Feel Good Factor

The “feel good” factor associated with hosting a charitable organization in one’s backyard cannot be overlooked in the story of Haley House. With robust property values, no memorable violent incidents perpetrated by Haley House guests, and a relatively sanitized image, the presence of a soup kitchen helps the neighborhood retain its urban self-image; the organization is not threatening at all. Those who are unaware of Haley House will not object to its presence; there are no longer fears surrounding property values or perceived threats to resident safety. In fact, to some – those not bearing the brunt of the noise – Haley House is a bit of a jewel in the neighborhood crown.

⁷³ Personal interview #3.

In 2004, the Ellis South End Neighborhood Association presented Kathe McKenna with the Arthur F. Howe Community Service Award, given annually to “an individual who has made an important contribution in preserving the uniqueness while improving the quality of life in Boston’s historic South End.”⁷⁴ Historically, there had been little interaction between the two groups; the award has significance in that the Ellis Association presented Haley House as a source of neighborhood pride. Arthur F. Howe, it is important to note, helped found the South End Historical Society; his work was less about preserving diversity and social justice in the South End, and much more about preserving its architectural heritage. Though never quite a neighborhood pitbull, Haley House has, in some ways, become the neighborhood showdog.

Conclusions: The Future of Haley House

The Network

The Ellis section of the South End, while comprised partly of long-term residents, is also no stranger to resident turnover. Building prices have soared in recent years and new faces are common.⁷⁵ While the organization has a significant network of neighborhood supporters, it is important to note that the strongest alliances are with those who have a close personal affiliation with Haley House – former members of the live-in community or those with some sort of history as a paid employee. This network of allies, comprised largely of people in their fifties or older, is not being replaced by a younger generation of former staff; the Ellis neighborhood is now far too pricey to allow for Haley House live-ins to remain in the immediate vicinity after their time living in Haley House is complete.

⁷⁴ www.ellisneighborhood.org

⁷⁵ Personal interviews #3, 5.

As stated, Haley House does little outreach to the “new” neighborhood in an attempt to gain support. It appears as though in addition to Haley House’s network of long-time supporters, the only “new” supporters are those who approach Haley House, offering to volunteer in the soup kitchen or otherwise identifying themselves as allies. There is only a smattering of examples of these supporters. The organization recently hosted a community pancake breakfast; it was not organized by Haley House, but rather, by a group of sociology students from Northeastern University whose outreach efforts were limited. Kathe McKenna was unable to participate, and no members of the neighborhood association attended. Haley House’s network of local supporters was critical to helping the organization stave off community opposition, and while there is no sign of mounting protest to Haley House’s presence or its operations, it might behoove the organization to beef up its local alliances.

Flying Under the Radar

Haley House’s ideology is one of inclusion and breaking down barriers between groups that are traditionally seen as vastly different. The live-ins speaks at length of the importance of building community, but some of its members admit that these efforts have not extended beyond the walls of Haley House.⁷⁶ “Building community,” at present, is limited to connecting on a personal level with others who share the organization’s ideology. Conversations among the live-ins and those who are otherwise embedded in the organization (staff, former live-ins, guests, visiting volunteers, or live-ins from other

⁷⁶ Campbell, Adam; Clark, Anna; Nichols, Judy. Personal interview.

Catholic Worker houses) are highly reflective and seem to be rooted in a shared language that is indigenous to the Catholic Worker Movement. Connecting with immediate neighbors whose own value systems are not so closely tied with the Catholic Worker Movement is more difficult. The live-ins speak to Haley House's prophetic presence in the neighborhood, but are forthright in admitting they know few of their neighbors outside of the major players in the Haley House network.⁷⁷

Haley House wants to "live out (the organization's theory of) non-violence neighbor to neighbor," acting as a "model" for "how to behave" by "being good neighbors" and "serving all of the neighborhood."⁷⁸ However, the scope of the organization's reach at this time is limited. Haley House and its strongest supporters exist, by and large, separately from the local neighborhood association and its cohort. (While the neighborhood association does not represent the entirety of the neighborhood, it is an active association and is a significant neighborhood force.) While some of the organization's strongest supporters are sporadically linked to the actions of the Ellis South End Neighborhood Association, the executive director herself – the actor most closely associated with Haley House – is not.

In short, two different worlds exist side-by-side – in some ways unbeknownst to Haley House. Problems, according to McKenna, are minimal, and solved quickly with a single phone call; some abutters feel differently, and newer residents might not even be aware of whom to call if and when there is a problem. One Ellis resident notes that Haley House

⁷⁷ Campbell, Adam; Clark, Anna; Nichols, Judy. Personal interview.

⁷⁸ McKenna, Kathe. Personal interview.

could do a better job recognizing that its own *neighbors'* frustrations are just as valid as are the feelings of the guests.⁷⁹ Even some of Haley House's supporters are aware of a gap that sometimes exists between the organization and the neighborhood at large.

Haley House is seen by some as being “an island.”⁸⁰ Newer neighbors are often unfamiliar with the neighborhood's history and those who are see Haley House as an anomaly in a ritzy neighborhood, rather than as an organization that embodies what was once the prevalent philosophical disposition of many South Enders. Conversely, Haley House sees itself as being the fabric of the neighborhood, having been on Dartmouth Street far longer than most of its neighbors, its mission and philosophy largely unchanged. Haley House's anonymity in the neighborhood does not seem to be waning. Truly connecting the house of hospitality to its less activist neighbors would be a great challenge indeed. And while Haley House's local supporters are certainly a significant force, they do not represent the entirety of the “neighborhood” that exists within the boundaries of Ellis. Haley House was spared from the forces of gentrification, because its guests were largely flushed outward; ironically, Haley House remains an inward-looking organization.

⁷⁹ Personal interview #11.

⁸⁰ Personal interview #4.

CHAPTER 4

Case Study: Pine Street Inn

When Eileen Taylor moved to the edge of the South End in 1979, she joined other young artists – primarily painters and performance artists – already living in the neighborhood’s large commercial spaces. The buildings, she explained, were spacious enough to accommodate their professional needs. They came with an added bonus – they were cheap. And with good reason. The neighborhood – abutting a major highway – was, at the time, essentially “a no man’s land.”⁸¹ Here, Eileen says, she and her cohort would paint and sculpt, and would “follow the lives” of the neighborhood’s other major demographic – the indigent men and women who made their homes in and around the area’s abundant shipping containers and loading platforms. When Pine Street Inn, Boston’s largest and most well known provider of services to the homeless, moved to the neighborhood in 1980, its clientele was literally at its doorstep.

Today, physical vestiges of the neighborhood that Eileen and her friends called home in the early 1980s are few. Boston’s hot housing market and the cache of a South End address have rendered the area – recently coined “SoWa” (South of Washington) – one of the city’s “hippest neighborhoods,” at least according to local restaurateurs and realtors that do business there. Rapid, large-scale development has changed the neighborhood’s entire physical landscape. At least eight construction or renovation projects – half of them with more than 35 residential units, and several with more than 100 units – have been

⁸¹ Taylor, Eileen. Telephone interview.

completed since 2000. In the midst of this new residential luxury – and the trendy shops that accompany it – Pine Street Inn still sits.



A partial view of the four buildings that comprise Pine Street Inn's facilities on Harrison Avenue in the South End.

Pine Street Inn – Mission, History, and Clients

Pine Street Inn (PSI) is massive, in terms of its physical structure, its mission, and its reputation. The Inn operates two overnight shelters – one for men and one for women. PSI's outreach van can be spotted on the streets of Boston at all hours of the day and night, working with some of the city's most troubled – those who live on the streets and rarely, if ever, seek shelter. The Inn strives to meet other basic needs of the city's homeless, offering medical assistance, food, clothing, literacy programs, job skills training, and social connections for some of the city's most seriously mentally ill.

Each night, Pine Street shelters up to 700 men and women at 444 Harrison Avenue in “SoWa.” Each morning, beginning in the very early hours, the majority of these men and women walk out the doors of Pine Street Inn. Some wait on Harrison Avenue for the shuttle bus that will take them to an off-site substance abuse program. Some meander toward Haley House for the morning meal. Some, of course, leave for their jobs. Many, however, wake up with few concrete plans, and might spend the day loitering in the neighborhood, or hanging out in the outdoor area on Pine Street Inn's property. Like some of the men who utilize the services at Haley House, many of Pine Street Inn's guests are battling mental illness, chemical addiction, or both. Their comings and goings do not go unnoticed by their new, upscale neighbors.

When Pine Street Inn outgrew its facilities in nearby South Cove, its move to Harrison Avenue was carefully considered. In Songs from the Alley, Kathleen Hirsch's ethnographic portrait of some of the lives that have been touched by Pine Street's

services, the author quotes Robert Walsh, the Project Director of the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) at the time, as he explains why the site was chosen as Pine Street's new home; "It was in nobody's backyard – simple as that."⁸² The author notes that "the South End was the most sensible choice, specifically the two block strip that had been the city's first landfill back in 1804, now an industrial corridor from Chinatown to Boston City Hospital and Massachusetts Avenue."⁸³ On the far side of a now-defunct elevated subway line, the site was literally on the wrong side of the tracks, "buffered from residential streets by commercial Washington Street."⁸⁴ BRA documents describe it at the time as "the blighted and underutilized industrial section of the South End."⁸⁵ Pine Street Inn would have such a measurable impact on whatever neighborhood hosted it that the only solution was to site it in the farthest reaches of the South End – an urban desert, the future of which seemed bleak. Such siting strategies are not uncommon; "more controversial human service facilities have tended to be concentrated in low-income or transient neighborhoods, such as inner city communities and skid rows."⁸⁶



Pine Street Inn, before development seized the area. Date and source unknown.

⁸² Hirsch, 112.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Boston Redevelopment Authority, page unknown.

⁸⁶ Wolpert, 1976; Dear and Wolch, 1987. Cited in Takahashi and Dear, 82.

Despite its relegation to no man's land, community objection from the South End at large was fierce:

The South End's sixteen community groups – loud, well organized, and combative – went wild. First, they argued, they had lived through the worst years of urban deterioration. Then they'd had to put up with the influx of social service agencies, halfway houses, pre-prison release programs, shelters and detox wards, the sprawl of an expanding public hospital, and the scores of poor that daily passed through all of these. 'There were more social service agencies impacting the SE than any neighborhood in the city,' Walsh says. 'It was a social laboratory and they didn't want it any more. They couldn't understand why they had to have another one, particularly one which they found so offensive. It is a difficult thing for them to get up in the morning and have to step over somebody.'⁸⁷

The objectors weren't direct abutters; residents who lived many blocks from 444 Harrison Avenue recognized that the organization would have far-reaching neighborhood impact. SEPAC (South End Project Area Committee, an organization that monitored citizen participation in urban renewal projects in the South End) eventually "wrested an endorsement out of its membership."⁸⁸ Still, "believing Pine Street's relocation to be but yet another example of the city's plan to make the South End a dumping ground for social problems,"⁸⁹ a group of community members organized several lawsuits in an

⁸⁷ Hirsch, 113-114.

⁸⁸ Hirsch, 114.

⁸⁹ BRA document, page unknown.

attempt to block the Inn's plans to move to Harrison Avenue. The suits were ultimately dismissed and rehabilitation of the Inn went forward as planned.

Although it had no legal mandate to do so, the Pine Street Inn negotiated with the neighborhood in an attempt to establish a working relationship and minimize anxiety about the Inn's operations. South Enders were placed on the Board of Directors and the number of beds was capped.⁹⁰ The Inn moved to 444 Harrison Avenue in 1980. Despite local community objection to its siting in the South End, "The Inn enjoyed broad public support."⁹¹ Broad, in this case, is the operative word:

Despite its growth, the Inn continued to successfully nurture its image as a personal and caring place. Bostonians proudly displayed Pine Street Inn bumper stickers on their cars, sent their cast-off clothing to its bins, and in hundreds of small ways felt they were an essential part of its operations. People felt good about 'doing good' for Pine Street, and the dividends for the Inn were incalculable.⁹²

Pine Street Inn and Local Neighborhood Change

As recently as 1995, empty lots and vacant buildings comprised the bulk of the landscape in what is now SoWa. Home to the "hulking mass of the Pine Street Inn"⁹³ and little else, it was still considered, as it was when Pine Street initially located there, something of a

⁹⁰ Hirsch, 113-114.

⁹¹ Ibid., 210.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Mc.MDonlin, Seth. "SoWa is:"

no-man's land. In 1997, Washington Street, running parallel to Harrison Avenue, was designated a "Boston Main Street." The "Washington Gateway" implemented extensive economic development plans, investing 430 million dollars along the 1.4 mile-long corridor to renovate commercial and residential properties, upgrade storefronts, and attract new businesses to the area.⁹⁴ A mere eight years after receiving designation as a national main street, the Washington Gateway Project was one of only five districts (out of 400 that applied) to receive a Great American Main Street Award.⁹⁵

The revitalization of the Washington Street Corridor, of which "SoWa" is a part, is evident nowhere more than in the real estate market. The Weekly Dig, an online and print weekly focusing on "news, humor and nightlife" – the offices of which are located mere blocks from Pine Street Inn – notes:

Already, condos in the area are being sold for northwards of \$1 million. At the Laconia Lofts on Washington Street, a project that was the area's first major new residential development when it was completed in 2000, a 1385-square-foot loft is currently listing for almost \$800,000. Just down the street at the Wilkes Passage luxury condos, a development that includes 16 live-work spaces, \$490,000 will get you a 916-square-foot loft, though you'll have to shell out an additional \$65,000 for a deeded parking space. And meanwhile, on Harrison Avenue, the Gateway Terrace development is about a year away from completion, bringing

⁹⁴ www.gatewaymainstreet.org

⁹⁵ Ibid.

133 additional units to the neighborhood, ranging in price from \$446,000 to over \$1.2 million.⁹⁶



Some of Pine Street Inn's new neighbors on Harrison Avenue.

Pine Street Inn and Past Conflict

PSI has undoubtedly had conflict with the South End at large over time. As explored earlier, the Inn's initial siting on Harrison Avenue was opposed by local neighborhood groups. Once sited, tensions with the neighborhood certainly did not disappear. Massive deinstitutionalization of the state's mentally ill meant that PSI went from serving men who were battling alcohol abuse or who were simply "down on their luck" to serving a population with a more complicated set of problems. Reports of "assault, robbery, indecent exposure and harassment" a few months after PSI moved into the neighborhood sparked a community meeting focused entirely on the Inn and neighborhood safety.⁹⁷ A stabbing by a PSI client two thirds of a mile away from the Inn resulted in another

⁹⁶ McM.Donlin, Seth. "SoWa is:"

⁹⁷ Dreyfus, "Crime Meeting Focuses on Pine Street Inn."

emergency meeting just two months later.⁹⁸ Responsiveness has never been a problem for Pine Street Inn. When criminal acts took place, Pine Street Inn staff did not go on the defensive. The organization was forthright, acknowledging the impact that PSI has on the South End. Community residents were grateful for its efforts, as Rita Gallo, the then-chairperson of the South End Police Protection Committee said in a 1983 South End News article:

Today, even as the number of homeless people increases, the Inn has earned the response of many community leaders. 'The Pine Street Inn has become a model of cooperation with the community,' Rita Gallo said in an interview last month. 'By working together, we've produced a dialogue, an understanding. They've been very open with us.'⁹⁹

Pine Street Inn and Conflict Today

There is no denying the breakneck speed with which the neighborhood around Pine Street Inn has changed in recent years. With massive condominium construction replacing parking lots and semi-vacant properties, an entirely new neighborhood – in every sense – has emerged. This is not to say that there are *no* long-time residents in the area – many of the new buildings have apartments permanently earmarked for artists, some of whom were living in the neighborhood long before it was called “SoWa.” Some other residents and local businesses have managed to stick it out through the construction tsunami. Still, many of the residents are new to the neighborhood. Some have come from other parts of

⁹⁸ Dreyfus, “Stabbing Prompts Emergency Meeting.”

⁹⁹ Dreyfus, “Caring for the Homeless Amidst Conflicts: The Pine Street Inn Story.”

the South End or other neighborhoods in Boston. Many are empty nesters from Boston's suburbs who move to SoWa to take advantage of the area's art galleries and hip restaurants, its proximity to downtown Boston and its luxury residences. Few have ever lived next to a massive homeless shelter.

The behaviors of some of PSI's guests can appear to residents to be physically threatening at times. Disheveled or disoriented men and women sometimes dot the increasingly flashy neighborhood perpetrating "nuisance" behaviors such as loitering, stoop sitting and drinking. In years past however, there were no immediate "neighbors" to find such behaviors troublesome. Granted, loiterers in the South End might have been presumed to have been guests of Pine Street Inn (a "Piner," in fact, is a local euphemism for a homeless person) and might have resulted in a few calls to the Inn's staff. However, living ten blocks from 444 Harrison Avenue and spotting a few errant transients is not comparable to living next to the primary residence of many of the city's homeless. Complaints from *local* neighbors about loitering is a relatively new phenomenon, in large part because even *having* local neighbors is a new phenomenon.

Lyndia Downie, PSI's executive director since 1985, surmises that neighborhood change has been particularly pronounced in the last five years. The Inn has been forced to quickly create and execute a plan for responding to the concerns of this nascent neighborhood. This is no small feat; navigating the landscape of a changing demographic is difficult. Downie notes that neighborhood support for the Inn varies and that "no one tone is more consistent than the other." Some are grateful that PSI is making attempts to

work with the neighborhood; others are firm in their desire to see Pine Street relocate to another neighborhood. Others are, as of yet, not identified as friend or foe.

Identifying neighborhood concerns where they exist is easy for PSI leaders; those who object to PSI's presence make their opinions known. A new SoWa resident, a young attorney with the State Executive Office of Health and Human Services, might have summed up the sentiments of some of PSI's unhappy neighbors when he was interviewed for an article about SoWa's conflicting identities:

"We bought in August of 2002," says Brightwell, "and there wasn't a whole lot of discussion [about the neighborhood's less savory side]. [The realtor] said it was a great area, and it was very up-and-coming - which we kind of knew. But I'll tell you this much: The realtor never mentioned all the drug dealers. Or the people using our stoop as a toilet. We have pictures of our first week here when we were moving, and somebody defecated on our wall. We still have pictures of one of our friends cleaning shit off our wall."¹⁰⁰

The neighborhood is technically in the South End, and certainly has some "old South Enders" who remember the days before luxury condominiums outnumbered vacant commercial properties, but this cohort appears small in comparison to the those who, for example, protested the siting of a 7-11 a few blocks from PSI; while some cited aesthetic concerns, others claimed these arguments were simply a polite way of avoiding the actual

¹⁰⁰ McM.Donlin, Seth. "SoWa is:"

concern – that the convenience store would attract less than desirable customers to the neighborhood.¹⁰¹

Despite attempts by the Inn to squelch them, rumors abound that the organization has plans to leave the neighborhood; there is speculation that local realtors are insinuating as much. The overall population of the neighborhood has exploded in recent years, making identifying allies a challenge – the needles in the proverbial haystack. It would be easier to find the needles if the hay had been unloaded in smaller piles – not dumped onto the neighborhood all at once.

Analysis – Strategies

Deliberate – Visibility, Formal Alliance, Sanitizing the Neighborhood, A Regional Network

Visibility - “Pine Street Inn wants to be a good neighbor.”¹⁰²

From the beginning of its tenure on Harrison Avenue, PSI has understood that its presence creates significant impact, even beyond the immediate neighborhood; the initial resistance to its presence in the South End was heard from clear across Washington Street. The leaders at the Inn are pros when it comes to responsiveness. It has been only

¹⁰¹ Iafolla, Bobby. “Not in My SoWa.”

¹⁰² Manzo, David. Telephone interview.

in the very near past, however, that the organization has ratcheted up its visibility as concerns start to hit closer to home – literally.

Downie notes that the organization is too big too hide, and that PSI strives to “create a dialogue” with neighbors as issues arise. Calls from residents are encouraged when there are problems with the Inn’s guests. There is a designated point person who works closely with the local police department; his phone number is not a secret. In fact, at a recent community reception hosted by Pine Street, Downie stood at a microphone and slowly recited it to a crowd of nearly 100 friends and neighbors.

This is not to say that PSI is yielding to the neighborhood in every case. Downie notes that the Inn “tries to be reasonable” and forthright in terms of what it can and cannot control. The administration has set forth guidelines for when it can and cannot be expected to respond to neighborhood complaints about those presumed to be guests of the Inn; medical emergencies necessitate a call to 911, the police should be called if the activity is illegal or of a threatening nature, and Pine Street Inn will attempt to intercede if the individual in question is intoxicated to the point that it creates a mobility impairment.¹⁰³ Downie notes that the Inn is “supportive where we can be supportive, responsive where we can be responsive.” The Inn, she says, “walks a fine line” between controlling guests’ behaviors inside and outside of PSI, noting that it cannot control guests when they are on the street, and the Inn certainly cannot force anyone inside the building. PSI staff are not the police, nor are they the guests’ legal guardians. Often, the

¹⁰³ Coolidge, Aimee. Telephone interview.

behavior in question – sitting on a park bench or at a bus stop – is not even illegal. One resident notes that while the administration “doesn’t always do what we want them to do”¹⁰⁴ in terms of addressing problem behaviors, neighbors do in fact appreciate the responsiveness itself. Other residents just want the Inn gone altogether. It is in these conversations that PSI comes up against the proverbial brick wall.

The Inn is not out of touch with the need to cast a wide net in terms of building its support networks. The area’s few remaining vacant parcels of land are slated for residential condo construction, and PSI has spoken to developers about the possibility of their hosting a reception for new tenants and PSI staff upon its occupation. The Inn has also requested that information about its presence (and commitment to remain at 444 Harrison Avenue) be written into new leases, so that new tenants will be fully aware of the presence of *all* of their neighbors. Downie summed it up when she noted that PSI “needs to be a piece of the neighborhood” because, well, it would be “foolish not to.” The Executive Director notes that the Inn tries to “participate in a positive way whenever (it) can;” that the organization is “actively looking to be out there more often.”

Pine Street Inn participates in neighborhood clean-ups. The trainees from its food services program have catered several local events. The Inn tries to “put a face” on what might otherwise be seen as a mysterious and imposing “fortress.”¹⁰⁵ Most recently, PSI hosted a community reception at a local art gallery. Downie spoke at length about the Inn’s services, squelched rumors that the organization was planning to relocate, solicited

¹⁰⁴ Telephone interview #1.

¹⁰⁵ Downie, Lyndia. Personal interview.

volunteers, suggested neighbors visit the Inn to see it first hand, outlined the protocol for addressing problematic behaviors that PSI guests might perpetrate on the street, and extended an invitation to work together to strengthen the relationship between local residents and PSI. Downie admits that there is some risk when exposing yourself to the neighborhood in this way – but that it would be riskier not to. It is “better to risk it (by going out there) than to pull the drawbridge up.” While the response to the reception was “positive overall,” according to Downie, it is, of course, difficult to ascertain whether or not those who are most opposed to the Inn’s presence chose to attend. One resident noted that it seems as though PSI is moving from its “microcosm” of clearly identified supporters to the “macrocosm”¹⁰⁶ of the larger neighborhood. With new residents joining the ranks of Boston’s “hippest neighborhood” every day, broadening the scope of outreach in an attempt to bolster its local network of supporters is a wise move indeed.

A Formal Neighborhood Alliance – Old Dover Neighborhood Association

“Old Dover” is the local neighborhood association in which the borders of Pine Street Inn fall, and is, like most other South End neighborhood associations, a significant force in the community. The name Old Dover, it should be noted, is a reference to the neighborhood’s past; the elevated subway line that ran down Washington Street until 1987 stopped at Dover Station on the corner of Washington and Dover Streets. Bostonians who remember the South End forty years ago are likely to associate Dover Street with some of the neighborhood’s seedier goings-on; it was eventually renamed

¹⁰⁶ Telephone interview #1.

East Berkeley Street, undoubtedly, in part, as an attempt to erase the area's dodgy reputation.

Pine Street Inn is an active member of the Old Dover Neighborhood Association (ODNA); three Pine Street staff members hold seats on the Board, including Aimee Coolidge, PSI's Director of Community and Government Relations. While the Inn has been an active member for almost the entirety of the association's nearly twenty-year history, the Inn recognizes that playing an active role in the association is more important now than ever before. There is a strong sentiment that Old Dover would, if push came to shove, support the Inn. Pine Street's specific needs were included in a recent parking plan developed by Old Dover. ODNA lists Pine Street Inn first in the neighborhood resources section of its website. The association issued a letter of support when Pine Street requested an extension of a special permit to sell advertising space on its highly visible tower. Institutional support for the Inn as a neighbor is clear.

Sanitizing the Neighborhood: Controlling the Guys, Closing in on Itself

It would be nearly impossible for PSI to entirely remediate the effects of its presence on the neighborhood. The Inn will always have an impact as long as it continues to serve the population it is serving – some of whom are unable to fully grasp what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate behaviors. Still, Downie notes that of late, PSI has been more vigilant in its attempts to monitor the guests' behaviors. Staff make efforts to be more acutely aware of problematic clients – those who are dealing drugs or who may be engaging in other criminal behavior. The Inn has developed an active, cooperative

working relationship with the local police precinct – the police often call PSI when the station gets a call about a guest – as well as with the local crime task force. The Inn has offered to help fund a private police detail for the area around Pine Street during the summer months, when outdoor loitering by guests tends to increase.

No PSI guest has perpetrated a serious crime in recent history,¹⁰⁷ and the Old Dover neighborhood can certainly no longer aptly be called “Bum Village,” as some did in the late 1970s.¹⁰⁸ Still, the Inn is a noticeable presence, and as new development mushrooms up around it, the handful of guests causing the bulk of neighborhood complaints is becoming *more* noticeable. And as their presence becomes more discordant with the surrounding neighborhood, the only way for PSI to curb neighborhood complaints is to remove the guests from the neighborhood as best they can – bringing them *into* Pine Street, since pushing them further out is not an option. Pine Street is frequently a last resort for some of the city’s most troubled; the guests often have nowhere else to go. In short, PSI has been forced to close in on itself, since, other than relocating the facility and bringing its followers to another neighborhood, this is the only way to minimize the neighborhood impact caused by such a large organization.

This internalization of Pine Street Inn is actually *physically* evident. The organization has constructed a “wet park,” where guests are permitted to actively drink. Enclosed within the PSI compound and barely visible from the street, the park discourages PSI guests from drinking or being publicly intoxicated on the surrounding streets. Twenty-five years

¹⁰⁷ Downie, Lyndia. Personal interview.

¹⁰⁸ Telephone interview #12.

ago, PSI's guests had the run of the neighborhood; today, they are more or less confined to the buildings that comprise Pine Street Inn, and to the small outdoor space designated for their use.

A Regional Network

Pine Street Inn benefits from an unparalleled regional network of supporters. In the South End – in fact, in Boston, in all of Massachusetts, and perhaps even throughout New England – Pine Street Inn is famous. Even those who have no relationship with the Inn have some general familiarity with the kinds of services that the organization provides, although most would likely cite the large emergency shelter before mentioning job training or other programs. “Pine Street Inn,” in Boston, is synonymous with homelessness, and in particular, with individual homeless men facing the most dire of personal circumstances. The Inn still receives, as it has since its inception, a great deal of political support, on both the city and state level. It is intimately familiar with the media as well; it is not uncommon for local sports figures or politicians to make appearances at the Inn, or to otherwise support events that benefit PSI. It is a high-profile, politically savvy organization.

The Inn has yet to establish a similarly sturdy and extensive network of supporters within the reaches of its own front doors. Unless they are a part of the Old Dover Neighborhood Association, the few residents who have lived in SoWa since before it was known as such have no formal, identifiable connection to the Inn despite their length of tenure in the

neighborhood.¹⁰⁹ A recent breakfast honoring the Inn's volunteers – many of whom have been staunch supporters for the last 30 or 40 years – saw 300 attendees, the bulk of whom were from suburban food groups.¹¹⁰ While the Inn has an excellent working relationship with the Old Dover Association – formalized networks are its strong suit – identifying informal, individual supporters throughout the neighborhood has been more difficult. The physical design of the neighborhood makes relationship-building a challenge. Large multi-unit buildings lacking individual entrances offer few opportunities for chance encounters with Pine Street Inn staff or even with already-established PSI supporters. The speed with which the neighborhood has developed only serves to make matters worse. The neighborhood is still, in fact, developing – more construction is slated over the next few years – and the real estate market in SoWa is hot. “Flipping” – purchasing condominiums and reselling them shortly thereafter at a profit – is common, making it difficult to differentiate between those who will stay and support PSI, those who will stay and oppose PSI, and those who will simply leave.

Summing Up: The Future of PSI

The story of the relationship between Pine Street Inn and its immediate environs is in chapter one of a novel of undetermined length. Rapid growth and a murky landscape of networks make it difficult to predict how the narrative will unfold. One thing is certain – Pine Street Inn is not going anywhere anytime soon.

¹⁰⁹ Telephone interviews #1, 9.

¹¹⁰ Manzo, David. Personal interview.

Neighborhood objections to Pine Street Inn have yet to reach a fever pitch. Complaints are still “occasional” according to PSI staff, and come from a relatively small percentage of residents. Problems behaviors, similarly, come from a small, but noticeable, group of PSI guests. But the neighborhood is still in the throws of change, and it is doubtful that community discomfort with Pine Street Inn will simply disappear.

The Inn is by no means unaware of the impending threat and is busy getting its proverbial ducks in a row. Formalized relationships with government leaders and the local neighborhood association are a critical part of Pine Street’s strategy for combating any large-scale community opposition that might be coming down the pike. The organization is also making noble attempts to navigate the neighborhood waters by sustaining a dialogue with the community but remaining realistic about what it can and cannot accomplish. Aimee Coolidge notes that the “true test” of PSI’s staying power will be when development of the new condominium complex immediately next door to the Inn is completed. It is at this point that the Inn will nearly be, quite literally, surrounded. Pine Street Inn is an outward looking organization, even as it is being forced in upon itself.

CHAPTER 5

Traditional NIMBY, The “Flip Side” of NIMBY, and the Missing Link

Haley House and Pine Street Inn are both agencies working with a difficult-to-serve population in a changing – or changed – South End. Both have faced, or are currently facing, community opposition to their operations – or to their very presence. But the similarities end there. Both Haley House and Pine Street Inn are grappling with the same organizational challenge – how to respond to a changing neighborhood. But their prospects for successfully navigating these waters are quite different.

In the “traditional” NIMBY scenario, a social service agency moves into a neighborhood that has a specific demographic profile; the *organization* brings the change. With Haley House and Pine Street Inn, the opposite is the case; it is the *neighborhood* that brings the change. The very definition of the scenario studied here – cases in which the changing market threatens the agency, not the other way around – adds a new dimension that is not considered in traditional strategies for overcoming NIMBY opposition.

This chapter will look at the community relations approaches that Haley House and Pine Street Inn have implemented – deliberately or non-deliberately – in response to their changing environments, in the context of traditional NIMBY literature and will draw conclusions about what is missing from traditional NIMBY that renders it insufficient to fully address the “flip side” of NIMBY.

Haley House – Autonomous

Although Haley House operates under the assumption it is closer to a collaborative approach than to an autonomous one, there is evidence to the contrary. While there is a great deal of discussion about being part of the neighborhood, relationships between the neighborhood and Haley House are limited to a certain extent to those neighbors who are philosophically predisposed to support Haley House's mission; many of these supporters are residual from the South End's politically active past. The network of supporters, while strong and significant, is no longer representative of the entirety of the neighborhood. There is little outreach to new neighbors. There is no designated Haley House representative at Ellis Neighborhood Association meetings, and the organization does not regularly participate in neighborhood clean-ups. One resident noted, "they are in the neighborhood, but not of the neighborhood."¹¹¹

As explored in chapter two, traditional NIMBY literature notes that an organization that utilizes an autonomous approach to siting controversial social services generally "accords priority to the rights of the clients" and implicitly or explicitly "reject(s) the notion of difference, and insist(s) on the clients' rights to live, work, play and receive care wherever they choose, under circumstances of their own choosing."¹¹² The language of social justice and clients' rights, and discussions of "breaking down barriers" between guests and staff are common inside the walls of Haley House. There is a great deal of emphasis on "getting to know the guys" on a personal level; the live-ins eat the same

¹¹¹ Personal interview #4.

¹¹² Dear, 294.

food upstairs that the guys eat downstairs. Haley House *explicitly* rejects the notion of difference.

Were Haley House to attempt to locate in the Ellis neighborhood now, a “low profile” approach would likely be an appropriate choice according to what is already known about NIMBY. Haley House’s small scale and the fact that it operates out of a brownstone similar to the rest of the neighborhood bolster its ability to operate autonomously. Its strong network of informal power brokers can substitute for the more formal political power that is recommended as a prerequisite for use of an autonomous approach. Staff time and resources – in limited supply at this organization that for quite some time accepted no government funding – are rarely available for planning and implementing high-profile community outreach strategies, which is also a legitimate reason to enact a low-profile approach.¹¹³ But despite having all the ingredients necessary for successfully utilizing the autonomous approach, ultimately, it was not this strategy that protected Haley House. Haley House’s survival can be attributed in part to an outside force; operating in tandem with the organization’s efforts to discourage problem behaviors was *the slow gentrification of the neighborhood itself*.

Over time, Ellis slowly changed from a neighborhood of rooming houses and vacant buildings to one of pricey real estate. Loitering, public drunkenness and other nuisance behaviors came to be seen by the neighbors as more problematic than in the past. Newer residents successfully chased out the majority of the neighborhood derelicts. Suddenly,

¹¹³ Anello and Shuster, 12.

Haley House's role in attracting and retaining the few remaining "undesirables" became more apparent. It was at this point that tensions between the neighborhood and Haley House reached their apex. Haley House acquiesced to the neighborhood's demands that it better control the behaviors of its guests. The organization began to discourage loitering and other behaviors that were considered objectionable by neighbors.

Because Haley House is a small agency, serving no more than 40 guests at a time, and for only brief periods of the day, its presence was not the sole factor contributing to the neighborhood's troubles; Haley House did not *bring* blight to the neighborhood. As a result, gentrification of the neighborhood was possible without the removal of Haley House, and gentrification ultimately made Haley House less of a problem to the neighbors. Haley House simply had to gain some control over its guests, and let gentrification run its course. Simply put, as the *neighborhood* slowly became less conducive to loitering, Haley House guests loitered less. With the bulk of local "derelicts" having been flushed out of the neighborhood, the organization became less threatening; Haley House has survived the "tipping point." Today, the only consistent complaint about Haley House is early morning noise, and this is limited to direct abutters.

While having unintentionally followed the autonomous strategy that would have been recommended by the literature in the "traditional" NIMBY situation, ultimately, it was the effect of the real estate market on Haley House's operations that has allowed it to survive the tipping point in the story of change in the Ellis neighborhood. Haley House served those who were once the area's prominent demographic, briefly became a

neighborhood scourge, and ultimately emerged as at worst, a loud but tolerable neighbor or at best, a point of neighborhood pride. It was the change in the neighborhood itself – namely, *slow gentrification* – and its interaction with the organization that has allowed Haley House to remain the “last man standing.”

Pine Street Inn – Collaborative

Pine Street Inn has used a collaborative approach to community relations for the entirety of its operations – or at the very least, since moving to Harrison Avenue – and has done so quite deliberately. The organization does not deny the level of impact created by its presence. PSI, as previously mentioned, actively tries to “be a part of the neighborhood.”¹¹⁴ PSI has a close working relationship with the local police department, participates in neighborhood clean-ups, caters local events through its food services training program, and recently hosted a community reception during which the executive director spoke to a packed house about the Inn’s services and commitment to the neighborhood. The Inn has also done an excellent job of identifying formal powerbrokers – it has a close working relationship with a variety of influential political figures and the Director of Community and Government Relations serves on the board of the local neighborhood association. Informal power brokers are more difficult to identify; neighborhood change has been rapid and resident turnover is high.

Just as NIMBY literature would have recommended the autonomous approach to Haley House, it would have recommended the collaborative approach to siting Pine Street Inn,

¹¹⁴ Downie, Personal interview.

given the specific conditions of the organization. The collaborative approach can be loosely paralleled with the “high-profile” approach, which is recommended when, among other things, the agency has a strong history of service within the community, has broad political support and/or the proposed site is city-owned.¹¹⁵ Pine Street Inn has all three. (The Inn owns 3 of the 4 buildings on Harrison Avenue, and has a 99-year lease from the city on the final structure.) In addition, the collaborative approach is recommended when “good community relations are vital to the ongoing success of a program.”¹¹⁶ Pine Street Inn’s significant neighborhood impact certainly makes “good community relations” an important component of its long-term tenure. NIMBY literature is once again insufficient, however, as there is another force at work. But in this case, that force is *jeopardizing* Pine Street Inn’s operations. *Rapid gentrification* of a neighborhood in which the organization in question is the city’s largest provider of services to the homeless is posing a threat to Pine Street Inn.

Until recently, Pine Street Inn comprised a significant portion of the Old Dover neighborhood. Then condominiums dropped upon it. The presence of questionable characters in the neighborhood could only be attributed to the Inn itself, and the organization was forced to become much more cognizant of the public behaviors of its guests. Front line staff now make concerted efforts to stay abreast of which guests might be dealing drugs or engaging in other illegal behaviors that could ultimately lead to scuffles with the neighborhood. An internal park has been created to discourage PSI guests from loitering in more public spaces. True, it is only a handful of guests and true,

¹¹⁵ Anello and Shuster, 12-13.

¹¹⁶ Dear, Michael and Wilton, Robert. www.bettercommunities.org

it is only a handful of neighbors. But the sheer size of the neighborhood and the sheer size of Pine Street Inn make this inevitable – enemies are just as likely to pop up as are supporters, and troublesome guests are just as likely as well-behaved ones to present themselves. Pine Street Inn simply can't please all the SoWa-ers all the time. As such, the only way for Pine Street to continue serving its guests in place is to gain more control over their behaviors. In short, the market has surrounded the Inn and is rapidly closing in.

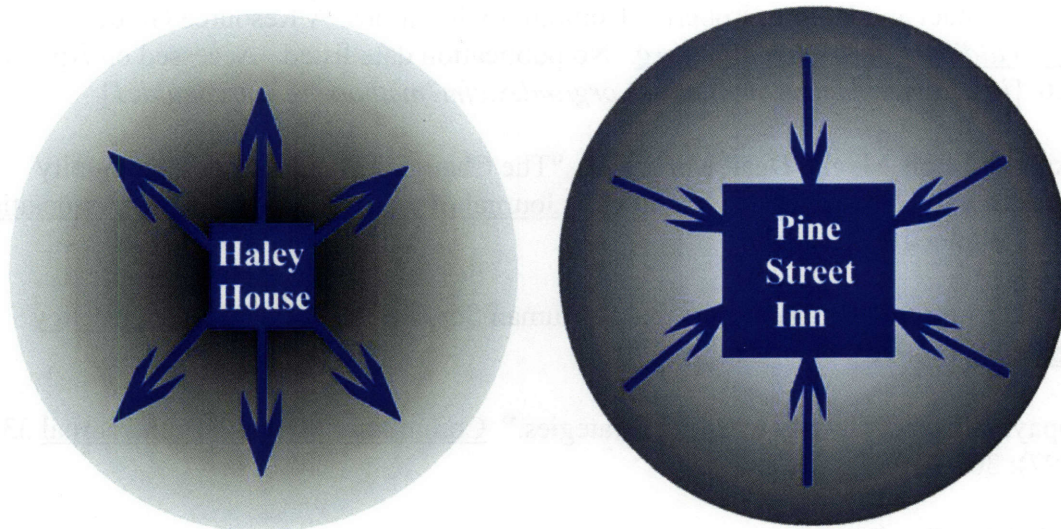
Final Conclusions

The strategies recommended in traditional NIMBY literature are a fundamental piece of helping already sited social service agencies respond to the increased opposition they might face when the neighborhoods in which they are located begin to gentrify. The community concerns put forth in either case are comparable, and the literature pays close attention to the importance of understanding the specifics of each case before choosing a strategy. Still, despite having “chosen,” according to the traditional NIMBY literature, the appropriate strategies for overcoming community opposition given the specifics of their individual cases, there is an additional factor at work in the cases of Haley House and Pine Street Inn that render traditional NIMBY strategies insufficient – namely, *the nature of neighborhood change itself, including the speed and scale of change and the way in which the real estate market itself affects the community landscape.*

Haley House is a small organization, in a small-scale neighborhood that saw slow change. Haley House was never the *source* of the neighborhood blight, but rather, served a clientele in an already blighted neighborhood. As the neighborhood began to gentrify and “undesirables” were displaced from the streets and the vacant buildings, Haley House did become more of a neighborhood scourge, but only briefly. In the late 1980s, tensions peaked, the remaining non-Haley House loiterers dispersed to more welcoming neighborhoods, and Haley House made some efforts to monitor the behaviors of its guests. The organization – now serving a population in the minority in the neighborhood – was perceived as less of a threat, ultimately becoming a combination of benign neighbor and source of local pride. More “gentrifiers” helped Haley House. The

organization survived the demographic tipping point, and emerged as the proverbial last man standing.

The effects of neighborhood change in the case of Pine Street Inn falls at the opposite end of the spectrum. A massive organization, Pine Street Inn was located in the Old Dover neighborhood specifically because it would be the area's primary resident. It is nearly impossible to disentangle the organization itself from neighborhood blight. While Haley House was able to survive a demographic tipping point because the neighborhood around it was sanitized, leaving only Haley House's discrete guest population, the same fate is not likely for Pine Street Inn. It would be impossible to sanitize the Old Dover neighborhood *without relocating Pine Street Inn itself*. The Inn's guests often have nowhere else to turn; they do not opt to loiter in other, more welcoming environments, as none exist. Neighborhood opposition, while not universally boiling, has certainly increased in the past few years as the new condominiums fill up at warp speed. More "gentrifiers" have hurt Pine Street Inn. Gentrification has forced the organization to close in on itself.



Slow, small-scale change in the Ellis neighborhood has flushed out Haley House's clientele, while rapid, large scale change in the Old Dover neighborhood has pushed Pine Street Inn's operations inward.

The real estate market has actually *helped* Haley House survive, while it poses a *very real threat* to Pine Street Inn. The nature of neighborhood change is a force that has not been considered in traditional NIMBY research, simply because when a social service agency locates in a neighborhood, *the agency itself* is the actor bringing the change; little about the neighborhood other than the organization's presence is altered. In the reverse scenario, however – when neighborhood change is brought *to* the organization – the way gentrification shapes the neighborhood landscape is a critical piece of the puzzle, and is a force that should be considered when social service agencies are responding to community opposition in gentrifying neighborhoods.

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